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COMOR-M-44

COMMITTEE ON OVERHEAD RECONNAISSANCE

Minutes of Meeting Held in Room 429
Matomic Building, Central Intelligence Agency
at 1:30 pm, 30 August 1961

PRESIDING

James Q. Reber
Chairman

MEMBERS PRESENT

Col. L. E. May, USAF

Deputy Chairman

Mr. H. M. Wiedemann, State

Mr. H. C. Brown, OSD

Col. J. L. Cole, JCS

Col. D. D. Davis, OACSI

Cdr. H. D. Myles, ONI

Col. J. M. Winterbottom, AFCIN

NSA

Mr. W. A. Tidwell, Jr., CIA

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CONSULTANTS PRESENT

Maj. J. D. Bowlby, OACSI

Lt. Cdr. R. E. Pyle, ONI

Maj. S. J. Moran, AFCIN

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* part time

Use of TALENT in Berlin Crisis

1. Colonel Winterbottom outlined an Air Force proposal for the preparation of priority targets to be used in contingency planning in the Berlin crisis. Mr. Tidwell proposed in COMOR-D-47 the establishment and maintenance on a current basis of a list of targets suitable for collection on the USSR by overflight in some unforeseen circumstance which might arise out of the Berlin crisis. Commander Myles distributed a copy of the memorandum from the Director of Naval Intelligence to the Chairman of the USIB [] proposing that in connection with the critical international situation there be periodic surveillance of seven principal Soviet naval bases which, among other things, would contribute to the determination of the Soviet intentions.

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2. The COMOR agreed to the following format in the preparation of four lists of targets. When these targets have been assembled the COMOR would then place them in the context of the COMOR view at that time which presumably might range from a recommendation that these targets become the basis for contingency planning by operations to specific recommendations for overflight. The purpose of the form set forth below is at this time only to give guidance to each agency to insure that the various presentations are in keeping with one another.

"Basic Assumption: That U. S. policymakers will need to know on a more firm basis than is now available the current status of the Soviet military power position--particularly the size of the Soviet surface-to-surface missile deployment program. This information could be essential in enabling the policymakers to weigh the risks involved in standing up to Soviet pressure. The targets (Tab A) to be covered under this basic assumption might need to be covered in advance of, or in conjunction with, certain targets listed under one or more of the contingencies mentioned below:

a. Assuming no near-term settlement of the Berlin crisis, our knowledge of the military situation in East Germany needs to be completed and brought up to date (Targets see Tab B).

b. In the event that access to Berlin is closed to the Allies, it is essential to determine the status of Soviet and satellite forces adjacent to Berlin, elsewhere in East Germany, and possibly in certain European satellite countries. Effective determination of the status of these forces would probably require periodic overflights (Targets--Tab C).

c. Depending on the course of the Berlin crisis after access routes are closed, periodic coverage may be required of those targets capable of attacking Allied Forces in Europe as well as those capable of attacking the U. S. (Targets see Tab D.)"

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3. (The Chairman of COMOR proposes that the agencies endeavor to have the four target lists in his office by the close of business September 8, keeping in mind that [] should be followed in respect to categories of target, name of installation, and coordinates.)

Need for Intelligence on ChiCom Activities Opposite Taiwan []

4. The COMOR agreed that recent reports of unusual alert activities in areas opposite Taiwan had not turned out to be of sufficient

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concern to warrant a recommendation for urgent TALENT coverage of this area.

Further Consideration of Army Requirements on Laos

5. The COMOR requested the Chairman to forward its view on Laos as follows:

a. Planning for Mission 3055 in Southeast Asia was based on highest priority targets in North Vietnam with peripheral coverage of Hainan Island and South China border region. About 85 per cent of these targets were covered. Two highest priority targets on Hainan were not covered. Targets in Laos of lower priority were also submitted but with one mission authorized, the distance factor did not permit coverage of targets in Laos.

b. The Army emphasized the increased importance of the Laos targets, in the absence of a political settlement at Geneva. The COMOR concurred with these requirements.

c. The COMOR again recommends coverage of Hainan Island and South China (targets which bear upon the ChiCom capability to provide military support in the event of a Communist push southward) which can be obtained only by penetration. The urgency for this coverage in terms of military contingency planning has not changed. COMOR also recommends the coverage of Laos.

d. If permission cannot be obtained to overfly Communist China at this time, the COMOR recommends that coverage of Laos by whatever means available be authorized as soon as possible.

Schedule of KH (RUFF)

6. Mr. Tidwell expressed the view that the current need for KH (RUFF) materials on the Soviet Union and satellites in the current international crisis was such as to warrant according priority scheduling to CORONA over ARGON missions. He recognized the significance and importance of geodetic control photography but felt it was less urgent and that there was time to obtain such when intelligence needs had been better met. The Committee took note of the fact that almost a month remained before the next ARGON shot and that, therefore, they would in the very near future need to come to a conclusion with regard to Mr. Tidwell's proposal. The members agreed to consult their superiors in preparation for further consideration of the proposal next week.

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Chairman's Note: It is requested that memoranda from any Committee member to the Committee normally should be mailed directly rather than forwarding all of the copies to the Chairman's office for mailing. It is understood that exception to this request would be when the urgency of the matter requires the originating office to bring copies for all members for distribution at a COMOR meeting.


James Q. Reber

Chairman

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

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